



Dana E. Blackwell
Executive Director

LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

COMMISSIONERS:
CAROL O. BIONDI, VICE CHAIR
PATRICIA CURRY
HON. JOYCE FAHEY
HELEN A. KLEINBERG
DAISY MA, VICE CHAIR
DR. LA-DORIS MCCLANEY
SANDRA RUDNICK
ADELINA SORKIN, LCSW/ACSW
DR. HARRIETTE F. WILLIAMS, CHAIR

APPROVED MINUTES

The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **April 4, 2005**, in room 140 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim transcription of events at this meeting.**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT (Quorum Established)

Carol O. Biondi
Patricia Curry
Joyce Fahey
Daisy Ma
Dr. La-Doris McClaney
Sandra Rudnick
Adelina Sorkin
Dr. Harriette Williams

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused/Unexcused)

Helen Kleinberg

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda for the April 4, 2005 meeting was unanimously approved.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

- The Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) RFP has been distributed to community providers. Dr. Sanders thanked both Commissioners Kleinberg and Sorkin for their input into the RFPs development.
- The P3 Project is being expanded to eight offices and retirees are now being hired to work on this project.
- During a presentation to the Assembly of Human Services Budget Committee, Dr. Sanders spoke about Point of Engagement (POE), Structured Decision Making (SDM), Concurrent

Planning and P3 and emphasized the need to invest in prevention and reunification through the utilization of savings and holding counties harmless as case loads go down. He reported that the committee seemed receptive and enthusiastic. He indicated that the Department may request that a letter of support from the Commission to the committee if the Department submits specific funding ideas.

- Dr. Sanders will be speaking with the City Council's ad hoc committee on gang violence and youth development today. He will speak briefly on AB 129 and the Department's MART program.
- The Concurrent Planning Redesign implementation in the Belvedere office begins today. This is the second office in the implementation phase, Lakewood being the first.
- Amarylis Watkins will be the acting deputy director until a permanent deputy director is hired. Dr. Sanders is hopeful that it will not take longer than two months and looks forward to the Commission participating in the interview process.
- As a result of several BOS motions to examine how group homes transition their services as placement with the agencies diminish, the Department will facilitate a workgroup to examine this issue. Commissioner Fahey volunteered to participate on behalf of the Commission.
- With respect to concerns raised by Vice Chair Biondi earlier in the year regarding increase of detentions, the Department's statistics show that detentions have remained stable through December 2004 to March 2005. He believes that this indicates that SDM is having its intended impact by assessing risk and safety at the front end. He remains concerned about the length of time children are staying in placement.
- Michael Gray has been assigned to oversee the development of kinship support services and ASFA support services into a kinship division.
- The utilization of SDM is 85% and response priority is at 100%.

Commissioner Sorkin asked Dr. Sanders for the funding rationale for the Asian Pacific Islander and American Indians under the PSSF RFP based on their representation in the system and what the funding status is for Latino Family Preservation. Dr. Sanders stated that Latino Family Preservation is structured as a case earning unit and that there is no threat to its funding. He was not able to speak specifically to the Asian Pacific Islander and American Indian populations, but stated that the funding for Family Preservation is based on the numbers of youth in out of home placement.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

- Chair Williams announced that she will take over the First 5 representation until the end of her chairmanship.
- Chair Williams stated that she attended the first meeting held by Michael Gray on the organization of the kinship division.
- Chair Williams suggested that the Commission consider participating in the Partnership Conference by holding a workshop on the work group reports.

NEW BUSINESS:

Dialogue with Dennis Boyle, Director, California Department of Social Services: Chair Williams welcomed Dennis Boyle. Mr. Boyle provided the Commission with a brief history of his career in social services which included working for CDSS during the Regan administration on welfare reform, AFDC, and implementation of the GAIN program. Immediately prior to his current appointment, Mr. Boyle was Director of Social Services for Riverside County. He stated that at the time of his appointment in Riverside County, child welfare in the county was in crisis with a high incidence of child deaths. He credited partnerships with public and private providers for his success in improving outcomes for children and families. Under his current assignment, Mr. Boyle has responsibility for the full range of social services in the state. As the CDSS director, Mr. Boyle stated that his focus will be on helping families become self sufficient through the use of TANF funds. With respect to child welfare, Mr. Boyle's focus is on 1) child safety and partnering with community providers to ensure safety; 2) strengthening the child welfare budget as a result of the findings in SB 2030; and, 3) monitoring outcomes through AB 636.

Vice Chair Biondi indicated the likelihood that the state's probation camps will be funded in the future by TANF. She asked if he will be part of the planning discussions. Mr. Boyle stated that he has already begun to dialogue with probation and expects that he will be a part of the planning. Vice Chair Biondi commented on how these funds will continue to be of benefit to this population, especially in light of the fact that many of these children were previously part of the foster care system.

Commissioner Curry had several questions. First, she commented that the current CWS/CMS system is limited and does not allow providers to access critical information on children in the foster care system. She stated that at both the state and federal level there has been difficulty getting the permission to develop a system to interface with CWS/CMS that would allow such access to take place. Second, she commented on the need to blend funds in light of an austere fiscal climate but stated that often times there are obstacles in doing so, some of which emanate from the state. Third she asked for his comments on the Title IVE Waiver, Proposition 63 and AB 129.

Mr. Boyle stated that during a recent trip Washington DC, he spoke with the Under Secretary of Health and Human Service, Dr. Wade Horn, who assured him that the request for the waiver is under review and that a response should be received some time during this coming summer.

With respect to CWS/CMS, Mr. Boyle commented that the system is an integral part of child welfare at the local level, however he acknowledged that the technology is antiquated and is poorly designed. CDSS is working with the federal government to redesign CWS/CMS so that it will be web-based. Commissioner Curry questioned why the county could not move forward with an enhancement system now that could ultimately be integrated with an improved CWS/CMS system the state and the feds plan to develop. Mr. Boyle commented that one of the strengths of the current system is that it is linked with all of the counties in the state. Commissioner Curry expressed her understanding that the contract with IBM has been extended an additional five years. If this is correct, Commissioner Curry expressed her concern that this would delay needed improvements to the system. Mr. Boyle stated that the state is in negotiations with IBM to move

the day to day operations of CWS/CMS to a state data center. This would allow the state to lessen their dependency on IBM and open the competition to other contractors. He anticipates that this will take place in the near future. Commissioner Curry expressed her desire to have input into the process. Mr. Boyle was amenable to input at the time when they begin to craft what such a system should ultimately look like.

In response to Commissioners Curry's comments on blended funding, Mr. Boyle suggested that Dr. Sanders was very imaginative in finding ways to blend funds. He further suggested that creativity at the local level was more important than permission from control agencies. He did state his willingness to work with Dr. Sanders on specific issues that present themselves.

Upon the passage of Proposition 63, Mr. Boyle stated he began working with the director of the state's health department to make sure that together they would send a clear message to all of the local child welfare and mental health directors that children and families in the child welfare system are intended to be beneficiaries. He has encouraged the partnership between local child welfare directors with their directors of mental health as they go through the planning process. Commissioner Sorkin asked Mr. Boyle to clarify the focus of Proposition 63 funding. She stated her understanding that at the present time it was to be used to resurrect Systems of Care and Wraparound. Mr. Boyle stated that the possibilities for the utilization of these funds are very broad and stated that the planning process will dictate how the funds will be spent. Commissioner Curry expressed her concern that in Los Angeles County the sentiment seems to be that because the child welfare system has Title IVE funds and EPSDT there is less need for these funds. Mr. Boyle encouraged the Commission and the Department to be assertive about the need for these funds in the child welfare and probation systems. He assured the Commission that both CDSS and CDHHS have sent the message that child welfare should benefit from these funds. In response to Commissioner Curry, Mr. Boyle stated that Proposition 63 funds could be used to match EPSDT funds and any other federal dollars.

Vice Chair Biondi indicated that the message being disseminated in Los Angeles is focused on the limitations of the funding. Mr. Boyle clearly stated that those messages are not coming from the state administration. Commissioner Fahey suggested that funds should be allocated to provide services to emancipating youth as a way of preventing their further reliance on the system. He agreed and commented that local administrations have the flexibility to use a portion of these funds toward the investment of prevention efforts.

Mr. Boyle did not feel he was prepared to sufficiently comment on AB 129.

Commissioner Sorkin asked if his administration was considering the recommendations from the Child Welfare Stakeholders Group and AB 636. Mr. Boyle stated that he participated on the Stakeholders Group and that Los Angeles and Riverside County are implementing Structured Decision Making as recommended by that group as well as an alternative response program. With respect to AB 636, Mr. Boyle believes firmly in the measurement of outcomes as prescribed through AB 636. Mr. Boyle further commented that Los Angeles County is moving in the right direction in terms of reunifying families as indicated by the Departments statistics. Commissioner Sorkin asked if the state's Kin-GAP Review will include qualitative data, so that there is a better understanding about how the program is meeting the needs of its recipients. Mr. Boyle expressed

his support for relative placement and the Kin-GAP program and indicated that there will be a more in-depth examination of the program. Chair Williams offered the Commission's assistance to Mr. Boyle on an evaluation of Kin-GAP and briefly shared with him an overview the Kin-GAP report recently issued by the Commission's Relative Care Committee.

Commissioner Rudnick commented on the poor oversight of the prescription of psychotropic drugs to foster youth. He agreed that oversight is necessary and suggested that there must be a strong partnership between the Court, the Department and the Department of Mental Health. Vice Chair Ma added that a health passport would aid in oversight efforts.

In the context of AB 636, Commissioner Sorkin asked what types of new partnerships between the state administration and county agencies Mr. Boyle envisions. He commented on his experience as a child welfare director which provides him with the distinct advantage of understanding how local child welfare programs operate. He stated that his partnership with local directors will be based on that experience, knowing what is possible and what is not possible and commented on the positive relationship that he shares with Dr. Sanders. Commissioner Curry asked if Los Angeles County would be given special consideration for its unique qualities. He promised to work with Los Angeles from that vantage point.

Chair Williams asked Mr. Boyle to comment on how the state's budget will impact the child welfare system. Mr. Boyle stated that the current state administration is dedicated to child welfare services as evidenced in the full restoration of funds from the initial budget cuts experienced last year. Additionally, he pointed out that county's such as Los Angeles continue to receive a sustained funding allocation despite a smaller case load.

Chair Williams extended to Mr. Boyle the Commission's appreciation for this occasion to meet with him and future opportunities for partnership.

OLD BUSINESS

Kin-GAP Policy Recommendations: Marcia Buck submitted a proposed revision to the Department's Kin-GAP Policy Statement #0100-520.35. She explained that the revision was inadvertently left out of the Kin-GAP report presented to the Commission at its March 21st meeting and is being presented today for approval and to be added to the approved report as an attachment. The revised statement is intended to clarify the policy for the many CSWs who use this Policy Statement as a tool to determine suitability of families in the program. She stated that individuals from the Department participated in the work group as did other community stakeholders.

Commissioner Sorkin questioned the rationale for deleting some of the specificity with regard to ILP services. Ms. Buck explained that the policy continues to contain relational information with respect to ILP services, but that the intent of the policy was to focus on the program criteria of Kin-GAP. Commissioner Sorkin expressed her concern that CSWs will not have full understanding of program scope and services. She expressed the same concern with issues relating to undocumented clients. The policy was approved by the Commission, with Commissioner Sorkin abstaining from the vote. Dr. Sanders will take Commissioner Sorkin's concerns into consideration when determining whether to implement the policy revision recommendations.

Proposition 63 Recommendations: The letter was unanimously approved with amendments to ensure that the letter was made stronger in its advocacy to accept the recommendations and that there was specific reference to Multi-dimensional Treatment Foster Care for families in the probation system. Further advocacy should take place with the Board Deputies.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Pia Harris provided testimony regarding a probation youth in her care as a suitable placement and that because he turned 18 years old all funding has stopped.
- Brenda Parks provided testimony regarding Kin-GAP and families who are receiving the service and should not be due to the special needs of the children in their care. She also testified on the need for educational advocates and tutoring.
- Cynthia Billey provided testimony regarding the ARM rates for Regional Center children and whether there is a contingency plan to assess children for these rates.

MEETING ADJOURNED